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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AIG, EU, PAKISTAN, NATO, KOREA, POPE,  
CLIMATE, ECONOMY

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#### [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute, ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau and most major papers opened with stories on a federal court's decision that single parents have to start working full time earlier. Editorials focused on the situation of single parents, the pope's visit to Africa, and the financial crisis.

#### [1](#)2. AIG Controversy

Die Welt judged under the headline: "Bonus Payments Turn into Bombshells," that "for the first time in his term, Barack Obama is now faced with harsh criticism. Especially his Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has demonstrated little sensitivity for the mood in society and obviously shied away from refusing AIG officials bonus payments. In view of the enormous sums of money that the U.S. taxpayers are now required to pay for the banking bailout program, these payments may be insignificant, but politically they are a bombshell. Obama will now have great difficulty prompting Congress to approve new funds for additional stimulus for the financial system. In this crisis, teachers, clerks, and factory workers have voluntarily agreed to receive less money, and there is no reason why managers, who are responsible for the crisis, should not do the same."

In a front-page editorial, Handelsblatt argued: "With his criticism of bonus payments for AIG managers, the U.S. president wants to catch up with a movement that is hurrying away. But it could be possible that this is the first great mistake of his term. He is swapping aplomb for populism and is now making his work more difficult. What is happening with AIFG is only the beginning. In the coming months, many more unsavory details will come to the fore

which will have the potential of creating a public outrage. Does Obama then always want to become the mouthpiece of the dissatisfied? Then he will not make any progress in resolving the crisis. The president should be the voice of reason. There are already enough fuming and angry politicians in Washington. On a short-term basis Obama is now glossing over the problems of his administration because it has not yet found a way out of the banking mess. And this is particularly true for his Treasury Secretary, Timothy Geithner. But the starting point to get over the crisis lies there."

Frankfurter Rundschau opined: "the recipient of bonus payments are the managers who created this mess. That is why it is no wonder that the U.S. taxpayer feels blackmailed. Bomb planters are now receiving bonus payments for the defusing of their own explosives. The political effect, however, is dangerous. It is hardly possible to convey to the American people any more that new state bailout programs might be necessary. The first who could feel this at the end of March could be General Motors & Co."

### 13. EU Summit

Under the headline, "Europe Is Checking Out," Handelsblatt had this to say: "Is the EU able to cope with the economic and financial crisis? Doubts are not only allowed but absolutely necessary, because the answer the EU wants to give at its summit meeting today and tomorrow will not convince anyone: no new economic stimulus package, no clear promise for assistance of the Eastern European countries, and no realistic consolidation strategy for the public households. In some parts the draft [for the final communiqué] reads like a declaration of helplessness. Instead of courageously thinking about new solutions, the EU only confirms its former, outdated, Lisbon strategy. This borders on schizophrenia. The EU is faced with the toughest test of its existence and its leaders are pursuing a 'business-as-usual' strategy. Unfortunately, there is no hope for an improvement as there are elections for the European Parliament in June. That is why new initiatives barely have any chance. Europe is checking out."

### 14. Financial Crisis

Frankfurter Allgemeine judged: "The most important lever that could prevent banks from falling back into their former excesses is the amount of capital reserves they must keep. The more capital reserves the banks must keep and the stricter the rules for the capital resources to get their businesses running, the less likely are the excesses of the past. New rules on the liquidity of banks could avoid the risky business policies of the past. But it would be a fallacy to assume that these measures would guarantee that the world could be saved from the next financial crisis. The oversight agencies only run behind developments. That is why the next crisis can be avoided only if critics are taken seriously."

### 15. U.S. Strikes in Pakistan

die tageszeitung commented: "It is one of the announcements during the election campaign that many of Barack Obama's supporters hoped that he did not mean. Unfortunately, President Obama keeps his word and has proposed expanding the combat zone against the Taliban and al Qaida into further parts of Pakistan. He does not deceive his voters but plays a dangerous game with fire.... The allies involved, including Germany, must finally stop to wait for the United States. Obama said he would listen. It's time to tell him something."

### 16. French Return to NATO Command

Sueddeutsche commented: "Maybe Sarkozy, if reelected, will be seen at the end of his presidency in 2017 as the founder of the Sixth Republic. It is however unlikely that the head of state of a key European country will create a French myth. It is certain that the fifth successor of Charles de Gaulle will have brought Gaullism, which the generations of Chirac and Mitterrand still respected, to an end.... For de Gaulle, the Republic was always the focal point.... When he was to submit to U.S. hegemony, he withdrew his army from the NATO command. The fact that Sarkozy, unlike his predecessors, is reintegrating the army is a definite breach with Gaullism. Sarkozy is a friend of America and admires Barack Obama."

De Gaulle was skeptical about America and did not know what to do with JFK. Gaullism always included distance to America."

Die Welt editorialized: "NATO is not the biblical father and France is not the lost son. The National Assembly only approved the facts. Regardless of De Gaulle and Sarkozy, the national interest is the focal point.... De Gaulle and Sarkozy share two convictions: first, France's sovereignty must be protected under all circumstances. Secondly, nuclear affairs cannot be shared, neither with the Germans nor the Americans.... De Gaulle was a realist as much as Sarkozy is one. Only the circumstances have changed."

Frankfurter Allgemeine remarked: "The return to NATO was probably his last coup for a long time. Sarkozy's idea was not popular among his supporters. However, his party is even more concerned over the social explosiveness in France. What was barely possible in a period of growth is increasingly difficult in a crisis. You can now often hear in Paris that France faces social unrest. Sarkozy does not launch reforms because he hopes he will survive if he keeps his head down."

#### 17. Climate Protection

Tagesspiegel opined: "This would be the right time for the Europeans to send a clear signal with respect to the financing of global climate protection, but we cannot expect this from the EU summit. Before President Obama has not revealed how much money he wants to spend on climate protection, the Europeans do not want to make any promises to the developing countries. But those who are now investing into a future with less carbon dioxide will have good opportunities to be on the winner's side after the crisis. The EU and the United States race with respect to climate protection and not play games."

Weekly Die Zeit had this to say: "The economic and financial crisis that was caused by human beings is creating devastations in the economic universe. The damage is great but not irreparable. But global warming that is also caused by human beings is jeopardizing the earth as a living space, and this damage is irreparable. Nevertheless, no nation or group of nations, including the EU, has resolutely put up a fight against climate change. But the longer the economic crisis lasts, the more Europe's moderate ambitions are fading, while the new U.S. president must first match his 'green announcements' with deeds. This struggle, however, requires more than windmills, more than fuel efficient cars and more than the insulation of houses. What is now necessary is a historical pact between North and South, between industrialized and threshold and developing nations. The economic crisis is no excuse. On the contrary, it shows which enormous amounts of money can be forked out within a brief period of time."

#### 18. North Korean Missile Test

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung carried a report on the planned North Korean missile test and noted: "The missile test planned for the beginning of April is provoking North Korea's neighbors, allies, and desired partners. Kim Jong-il and his regime are playing a risky poker game. With the launch of a long-range missile, North Korea will violate a UN resolution that was unanimously adopted, including with the support of China, after DPRK's nuclear test in 1996. Most observers agree that, with its belligerent activities, North Korea is primarily interested in entering into direct talks with the United States. Pyongyang hopes for a change of course of the U.S. policy towards Korea under President Obama. But it is not only the change of the international situation that is driving North Korea and Kim Jong-il to pursue such a provocative policy. The leader is under time pressure because 2012 is approaching, when the country will celebrate the 100 birthday of state founder Kim Il-sung. By then, North Korea is supposed to be a thriving and powerful country. Time will tell whether the planned missile test will lead to new talks with the U.S. and thus to economic assistance. In any case, Kim Jong-il will be able to demonstrate to his people military potential with a successful missile test. If North Korea does not turn into a thriving country by 2012, then it should at least be on the path to become a powerful country."

#### 19. Papal Visit to Africa

Headlines: Sueddeutsche: "Harsh criticism of pope over AIDS policy," Tagesspiegel: "Paris says Pope is a health risk - Outrage over Benedict's statement on the fight against AIDS"

Tagesspiegel's front-page editorial under the headline "Danger!" warned against Pope Benedict's statement on AIDS and HIV, saying: "Harm has been done across the world. The 'Pope of hope' as his supporter welcomed him has buried all hopes before his landing. Benedict does not say such things by mistake. The fact that his spokesman is trying once again to explain his boss speaks volumes - not in favor of the pope's farsightedness. His statement is so disastrous particularly because so many Africans pinned their hopes on him."

Regional Maerkische Oderzeitung commented: "First the Holocaust denier Williamson, now condoms and AIDS-it appears as if the pope is not just becoming estranged from Catholics but is indeed out of touch with reality.... The idea that the use of condoms aggravates AIDS is absurd."

Regional Neue Westfaelische noted: "Sexual abstinence will not cure AIDS but is a way of life priests have chosen. Pope Benedict's recent statement raises the question of how much out of touch with life a pope can be. Those who prevent prevention in Africa accept that the dying will go on."

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